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INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHBE/AMEMBASSY BELIZE 0788
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1565
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0020
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0014
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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAR; SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [CARICOM](#) [VE](#) [NS](#)
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT VENETIAAN REVEALS SUPPORT
FOR VENEZUELAN UNSC CANDIDACY

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 679

[1](#)B. PARAMARIBO 425

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARSHA E. BARNES, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) President Venetiaan told the Ambassador in a meeting on July 12 that while the recent CARICOM Heads of Government meeting in St. Kitts had not finalized a formal common position on the UNSC vote, it was his view that CARICOM hoped to reach consensus to support Venezuela in its UNSC seat candidacy. Echoing Georgetown reporting (ref a) about CARICOM member intentions to extract concessions in exchange for their support, Venetiaan said that a CARICOM delegation would call on President Chavez to discuss Venezuela's position on a variety of border disputes with CARICOM members before making a final decision.

[1](#)2. (C) The ambassador had asked the President to clarify uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the St. Kitts meeting, since there were conflicting reports about whether the heads of state had agreed on a unified position with regard to Venezuela's UNSC candidacy. She noted that Venezuelan has shown itself to be disruptive in a variety of international fora, citing its rejection of the outcome document at the 2005 World Summit in New York and its behavior at the Community of Democracies meeting in Chile. Venezuela should therefore not be given the opportunity to be disruptive in an environment where such critical issues are discussed as in the UNSC. While she realized that CARICOM members may find Venezuela's offer of inexpensive funding for fuel purchases attractive, she wondered in fact after Venezuela's national day celebration whether Venezuela could truly be seen as playing a constructive role in Suriname. (Ref b details the presence of indicted criminals and other unsavory figures from Suriname's period of military dictatorship at Venezuela's July 5 reception.) Furthermore, while UNSC candidate Guatemala's border dispute with Belize is being addressed within the OAS, Venezuela makes sizable claims on Guyana, has maritime boundary disputes with seven CARICOM members, and may have played an unhelpful role in discouraging foreign investment in Guyana. Finally, she understood that the Inter American Human Rights Commission had recently expressed concern that a new Venezuelan requirement for TV licenses constituted a limit on freedom of expression.

[1](#)3. (C) Addressing Venezuela's prospects for being a

disruptive international force, Venetiaan briefly noted that since the Iraq war some might lay a similar charge against the United States. He regretted the harsh tone of public discourse between Venezuela and the USG, saying he thought it was better to conduct relations more diplomatically. Recalling that despite these disagreements the U.S. remained a major purchaser of Venezuelan oil, Venetiaan said that sometimes trade interests and rhetoric diverge; he thought there would be a good basis for cooperation with Venezuela on the Council.

¶4. (C) However, one of the reasons there had been no public mention of a common CARICOM position in St. Kitts related directly to the border disputes the ambassador had raised. CARICOM intended to send a delegation to discuss these with Chavez, and take their final decision thereafter. He hoped that CARICOM would "have the opportunity" to support Venezuela. When the ambassador asked if CARICOMs support for Venezuela was proactive or merely against Guatemala's candidacy, Venetiaan replied that the answer differed among the various states. He did say that Caribbean banana producers and Guatemala had disagreements on the best structure for a banana regime.

¶5. (C) Comment: The upcoming delegation to Caracas notwithstanding, Venetiaan appeared to anticipate an eventual outcome supporting Venezuela. From his comments, it would appear we could put to productive use against that conclusion any evidence about unhelpful Venezuelan actions against investments in the region, statements undermining Caribbean banana interests, or signs of persistence in land/maritime claims. We would appreciate any information the Department might provide.
BARNES